



HEARD ACROSS MONTANA

An electronic newsletter in support of public safety services in Montana
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IM Weekly Highlights



- Roger Smith has been completing his final work on microwave and trunking sites on the east end of the Northern Tier this past week, including the Culbertson, Gideon, Plentywood, Scobey and Windy Hill sites.
- The Bull Mountain site has had new microwave antennas installed on the new tower, and microwave radio equipment has been moved into the new shelter. The contractor is currently working on the installation of new antennas at the Nixon site. These accomplishments bring the IM Project one step closer to having the Gallatin trunking sites on line.
- Motorola has completed its work on the Culbertson, Gideon, Scobey and Windy Hill sites. The Plentywood site is functional, but Motorola is waiting for hardware to be delivered to add an additional channel.

I-15/90 Consortium Members Updated

By E. Wing Spooner espooner@mt.gov

IM Project Director Dave McPherson began the Dec. 17 meeting of the I-15/90 Corridor Consortium with a construction status update on PSIC-funded projects within the consortium. The tower is up at Antelope Butte and all concrete work for tower foundations and shelter and propane tank pads is complete at the Antelope Peak, Ellis, KONA, Mauer, Sierra and VC Pass sites. Concrete work at the Sawtell site was not completed due to weather and will resume in the spring.

Sheriff Walsh presented highlights from the last IMPD meeting. Tom Dunne, Dunne Communications, reported on the status of radios around the consortium and gave an update on legacy frequencies that still have some issues associated with them. In other announcements, Dave McPherson informed members that he has accepted an invitation to chair the IM Audit Committee.

The next I-15/90 consortium meeting is scheduled at 10:00 am on Thurs., Jan. 21, 2010 at the Butte-Silver Bow Chamber of Commerce, 1000 George Street, in Butte.

NACo Interoperable Policy Forum Announced

By E. Wing Spooner espooner@mt.gov

The National Association of Counties (NACo), with grant support of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Emergency Communications, is pleased to offer an Interoperable Communications Policy Forum scheduled for Feb. 25 and 26, 2010 and will be held in Mobile, Alabama. It will be held concurrently with a meeting of the DHS SAFECOM Executive Committee and will focus on communications interoperability policy issues.

Applications are being accepted from county and municipal teams through Jan. 8, 2010. Previous participants in one of these Policy Forums (formerly called "Academy") may not apply again, so that we may extend the opportunity to as many new people as possible. This is likely the last of these Policy Forums that NACo will be able to offer due to funding constraints.

County and city officials—both in elected and management positions—are invited to apply. as a team. Professionals from various disciplines, along with an elected official who serves in a governing capacity, such as county commissioner or city councilmember, are welcome to apply. (NOTE: Participation of at least one public elected official who serves in a governing/policy-making capacity, is required on a team's application.)

This two-day event will help county and municipal officials address important questions and learn how to advocate for and implement actions related to governance, procedures, technology, training and exercises, and usage of voice and data equipment in a seamless manner in real-time. This is not a technical training seminar; rather, the Forum will focus on policy-level issues and concerns.

This is an excellent opportunity to build awareness with elected officials and others in your community on communications interoperability policy issues. Most costs are covered. Please see the website (<http://www.naco.org/interop>) for details about eligibility, covered costs, and selection criteria. Questions? Contact Rocky Lopes, Manager, Community Services, National Association of Counties, phone (202) 661-8841, e-mail: rlopes@naco.org.

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FCC Narrowbanding Requirements

By E. Wing Spooner espooner@mt.gov

A Federal Communications Commission (FCC) public notice was issued last week to clarify narrowbanding rules that affect all LMR systems that use channels operating below 512 MHz. Private Land Mobile Radio (LMR) systems use blocks of radio spectrum called channels.

In December 2004, the FCC mandated that all non-Federal public safety licensees using 25 kHz radio systems migrate to narrowband 12.5 kHz channels by January 1, 2013. Most current public safety radio systems use 25 kHz-wide channels.

Although the migration deadline may seem far off, public safety agencies need to plan now to develop strategies for meeting narrowband deadlines, which may include:

1. Assessing their radio systems and planning for replacements or upgrades. They should inventory their current equipment to ascertain what can be converted or re-programmed to 12.5 kHz and what will need to be replaced before January 1, 2013. Any radio that cannot be re-programmed to narrowband operation will need to be replaced.
2. Applying for new frequencies or modifying existing licenses. An agency that is licensed for a 25 kHz-wide channel is not guaranteed two 12.5 kHz channels. Licensees will have to justify to the FCC why they need additional channels.

As more agencies migrate to narrowband operation, the pool of available frequencies should increase. Using narrowband channels will ensure that agencies take advantage of more efficient technology.

However, as other radio operators switch to narrowband channels that may overlap older wideband channels, wideband LMR systems will experience increasing interference. Wideband operations will be secondary to narrowband operations as of the Jan. 1, 2013 deadline.

In addition, as of January 1, 2011, all new radios sold in the US must be narrowband-capable. New equipment operating on 25 kHz channels may be neither be manufactured or imported, but may still be sold. Also, the FCC will only grant narrowband license applications.

In short, do not wait until the last minute to begin or complete the "narrowbanding" process. PSSB is happy to assist local jurisdictions by answering narrowband questions or assisting with modifying licenses. For more information about narrowbanding, please visit this website: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/technology/communication/fcc-narrowbanding.htm>

A Summary of FCC Regulations

- January 1, 2013 is the deadline for migration to 12.5 KHz (narrow band) technology for any system operating in the 150-174 MHz or 421-512 MHz band.
- Effective Jan. 1, 2011, applications for new systems or modification applications that expand the authorized contour of an existing system operating at greater than 12.5 kHz equivalent spectrum efficiency will not be accepted.
- Beginning January 1, 2011, manufacturers cannot manufacture or import any 150-174 MHz and 421-512 MHz band 25 kHz equipment (including multi-mode equipment that can operate on a 25 kHz bandwidth) unless it demonstrates a 12.5 kHz or better equivalent spectrum efficiency;

Upcoming Meetings

- **Dec. 21 (Mon.)**
IM Technical Committee
Helena • 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
MACo Large Conference Rm., 2715 Skyway Drive
- **Jan. 7 (Thurs.)**
Northern Tier Consortium (NTIC)
Havre • 9:00 am
Great Northern Inn, 1345 1st St.
- **Jan. 8 (Fri.)**
Deadline for NACo Interoperable Communications Policy Forum applications. Visit <http://www.naco.org/interop> for details.

The Heard Across Montana newsletter will not be published again until Jan. 8, 2010.
PSSB wishes all of you a safe and joyous holiday season, and a very Happy New Year!

